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## Medical Encyclopedia

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## Abortion - spontaneous

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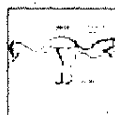
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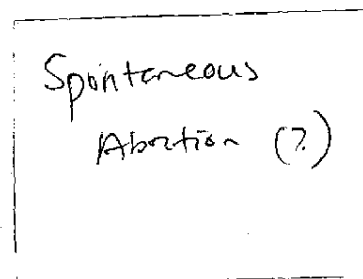
### Illustrations



Miscarriage



Normal  
uterine  
anatomy (cut  
section)



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Miscarriage

**Definition** [Return to top](#)

A spontaneous abortion is the loss of a fetus during pregnancy due to natural causes. The term "miscarriage" is the spontaneous termination of a pregnancy before fetal development has reached 20 weeks. Pregnancy losses after the 20th week are categorized as preterm deliveries.

The term "spontaneous abortion" refers to these naturally occurring events, not elective or [therapeutic abortion procedures](#).

More specific terms include: missed abortion (a pregnancy demise where nothing is expelled); [incomplete abortion](#) (not all of the products of conception are expelled); [complete abortion](#) (all of the products of conception are